



## BI520 New Testament Survey

### Short Syllabus

**Instructor:** Michael Morrison, PhD

#### Course description

This course gives students an overview of the New Testament documents: the authors, dates, places, genre, structure, and themes. Attention is given to individual documents, and how the documents work together for canonical unity.

To do well in this course, we expect that you will need to spend about 11-12 hours each week, for 12 weeks.

#### Required textbooks

DeSilva, David A. *New Testament Themes*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2001. ISBN [0827225113](#). 160 pages. Very good copies available for \$10.

Marshall, I. Howard. *A Concise New Testament Theology*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008. ISBN [0830828788](#). 304 pages. Amazon, \$26.

Wright, N.T., and Michael F. Bird. *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019. The book is often sold with a workbook and video lectures; only the book is required for this course. We will read 530 pages of this book.

The New Testament. About 300 pages. Use a modern translation, such as the NRSV, NIV, ESV, or NET. Do not use *The Message*, *The New Living Translation*, *The Passion Translation*, *The Voice*, or other paraphrases.

Please obtain the required textbooks before the class begins – in some nations, you

may need to order them before you register.

## Recommended resources

We recommend a series of easy-to-read paperbacks:

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*. 4th ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014. 304 pages. Previous editions are also good.

Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002. 448 pages.

Fee, Gordon D., and Mark L. Strauss. *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007. 170 pages.

## Student learning outcomes

This course serves to support to first GCS student learning objective: Explain the revelation of the Bible in its historical and cultural setting as it relates to God, Jesus Christ, and salvation, and its application for faithful living today. Through this course, students will be able to...

1. describe the circumstances in which each New Testament document was written, as far as is known.
2. trace major themes through the Gospels, epistles, and other writings.
3. describe how the documents are different, yet form a coherent whole.

## Requirements and assignments

1. **Read the lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday (or Tuesday, when Monday is a holiday) for the first ten weeks. See the *Academic Catalog* for study suggestions. You should look up any scripture references in the lectures.
2. **Participate.** In most courses, part of the learning comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a discussion forum. This counts for 10 percent of the final grade. When there is a forum, you should post at least one comment

by the end of Thursday, and reply to at least one other student by the end of Sunday.

3. **Read the textbooks.** They total about 990 pages, or about 90 pages each week. Most students find that it is best to read 20 or so pages each day, rather than trying to read all 90 pages in one day.
4. **Papers.** These count for 60 percent of the final grade. We estimate that you will need about 70 hours to work on these papers – an average of 6 hours per week – some weeks more, some weeks less. Much of this work can be done at the same time as you read the New Testament. For a guide to formatting your papers, see “How to Format a GCS Paper,” posted at [https://learn.gcs.edu/pluginfile.php/8936/mod\\_resource/content/1/How\\_to\\_format\\_a\\_GCS\\_paper\\_191018.pdf](https://learn.gcs.edu/pluginfile.php/8936/mod_resource/content/1/How_to_format_a_GCS_paper_191018.pdf). If you have Microsoft Word, please use the template posted on the course website; this template contains correct page and paragraph settings.
  - 1) For the first paper, trace a theme through the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, such as the kingdom of God, discipleship, or eating together. This paper is not a string of quotes<sup>1</sup> – it will require some analysis, commentary and synthesis from you. Pick a topic in the first week, and work on your paper each week, as you read Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts. Seven pages. Do not refer to any verses outside of these four books. They may use words or concepts in a slightly different way that the epistles do. The original readers of Matthew probably didn’t have Romans, for example. We need to see what each book says on its own. Do some outside research and footnote your sources.
  - 2) The second paper involves tracing a theme through the writings of Paul, John, Hebrews and the General Epistles. This may be the same theme as you used for the first paper, or it may be another, such as the divinity of Jesus, redemption, grace, hope for the future, etc. Seven

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<sup>1</sup> Quotes should not comprise more than 20 percent of the paper. Quotes are rarely self-explanatory – they need some introduction from you to describe their purpose. **All quoted material must be designated with quotation marks [“ ”] and the source must be noted.** In academic writing, do not italicize the quotes.

pages. Again, let each book speak for itself, without forcing it to match another biblical book.

5. **One final exam.** This counts for 30 percent of the final grade.

Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Hours</b>	<b>Percentage of grade</b>
Reading the syllabus and lectures. 200 pages	20	
Reading discussions and making responses	10	10
Taking the final exam	2	30
Reading the textbooks, 25 pages per hour	30	
Studying for the final exam	6	
Writing research papers, 5 hours per page	70	60
Total – about 12 hours each week	138	100

\* This is an estimate for the “average” student. A student who reads quickly may be slow in writing papers, and vice versa. Some students will complete the course requirements in less total time, and some will take more time.

## Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

Week	Topic	Assignments to be done during the week
1	Introduction Intertestamental history and Jewish theology	Introductory forum Wright and Bird, chapters 5 and 28 (42 pages) Also read Matthew, chapters 1-22 <sup>1</sup>
2	What is a Gospel? The Synoptic Problem Mark	Forum Wright and Bird, chapter 24 (24) Marshall, chapters 1-2 (22 pages) Read Matthew 23-28, Mark 1-12 Turn in your paper topic
3	Matthew Interpreting parables The kingdom of God	Forum Wright and Bird, chapter 25 (26) Marshall, chapter 3 (12) deSilva, chapters 1-2 (62) Mark 13-16, Luke 1-11
4	Luke Historical accuracy of the Gospels	Forum Wright and Bird, chapter 26 (44) Marshall, chapter 4 (10) de Silva, chapter 3 (36) Luke 12-24, Acts 1-7
5	Acts The narrative genre Introduction to Paul	No forum this week. <b>Paper 1 is due at the end of week 5</b> Wright and Bird, chapters 15-16 (60) Marshall, chapters 5-6 (27), Acts 8-28
6	Romans 1 & 2 Corinthians The epistolary genre	Forum Wright and Bird, chapters 21-22 (54) Marshall, chapters 9-11 (34) Romans & 1 Corinthians
7	Galatians - Philemon Pseudepigraphy	Forum A lot of reading this week: Wright and Bird, chapters 17-20, 23 (102) Marshall,

<sup>1</sup> The reading plan for the Bible assigns an approximately equal number of pages for each week, so that you will finish the Synoptic Gospels and Acts by the fifth week, when your paper on those books is also due.

		chapters 12-21 (70) 2 Corinthians through Philemon
8	Hebrews General Epistles	Forum Wright and Bird, chapters 30-32 (82) Marshall, chapters 22-26 (41) Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, Jude
9	The Gospel of John The epistles of John	Forum Wright and Bird, chapters 27 and 33 (56) Marshall, chapters 18-19 (25) de Silva, chapter 4 (30)
10	Revelation The apocalyptic genre	Forum Wright and Bird, chapter 34 (40) Marshall, chapters 20-21, 27 (40) Revelation
11	study week	<b>Proctored final exam must be taken this week. Send a message for an appointment, or arrange for a third-party proctor.</b>
	<b>Paper 2 is due by the end of week 12</b> <b>Easter is on ____</b>	